

STRANGER DANGER



When this dog first arrived at the MD SPCA, staff noticed they were a bit fearful of new people and unfamiliar environments. The shelter can be a scary place for a family dog with lots of strange faces, smells and noises. During their transition, this dog may have used appropriate distance creating behaviors like moving away, growling or air snapping to signal the need for space. Many dogs, particularly fearful/shy dogs will find direct eye contact and looming to be stressful and threatening. They are better able to warm up to new people if given the choice to approach when ready. Please toss high value treats as you engage with them to help them associate yummy food with people. Although there has been continued improvement, this dog may need additional training and management in a home environment. Here is a four-step approach for introducing a cautious dog to new people:

1. **Go Slow:** Have your dog in another room when guests arrive and wait until everyone is settled and relaxed before beginning any introductions.
2. **Watch carefully:** Be a thoughtful observer by watching for subtle signals (stiff movement, tucked tail, averted eyes, moving/leaning away, ears back) that tell you Fido is getting stressed or uncomfortable. All new meetings will need to be supervised and they should always have the ability to move away if needed.
3. **Manage:** Be your dog's advocate and intervene in a calm and cheerful way when you see trouble brewing.
4. **Take Breaks:** Give your furry friend lots and lots of breaks from the action. Short positive interactions with new people are far better than pushing Fido until he says 'uncle' or decides to take matters into his own hands or paws